

Review of Minimum Admission Standards for Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities



Winter 2004

W A S H I N G T O N
H I G H E R
EDUCATION
C O O R D I N A T I N G B O A R D

Purpose of Review

Review and revise, if necessary, the minimum state requirements for freshman admission to Washington's public four-year colleges and universities.

Why?

- Promote student success in college
- Reduce the need for remediation
- Reinforce K-12 education reform

Role of Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB)

- **State Statute**

HECB is charged with establishing minimum college admission standards for public four-year colleges and universities (RCW 28B.80.350).

- **2004 Interim Strategic Master Plan**

Key strategy: Improve K-12/higher education linkages to promote student success in college (revise current minimum college admission requirements).

Purpose of Presentation

Review

- I. Role of minimum college admission standards.
- II. Current minimum college admission standards, including the pros and cons.
- III. Relationship between state minimum college admission standards and 1) institution admission requirements, and 2) high school graduation requirements.

Solicit Your Feedback

Process and Timeline

- HECB will solicit stakeholder feedback through interviews, a questionnaire, and open houses.
- HECB will consider feedback and determine if revisions are necessary.
- HECB will strive to adopt any revisions by September 2004. Revisions would likely take effect for students who enroll as high school freshmen in fall 2005.

I. Role of Minimum College Admission Standards

- Establish what students must know in order to be *eligible* to attend a four-year college.
- Signal to high school students, parents, and administrators what courses and assessments are needed to prepare students for college.
- Provide direction to four-year public colleges and universities and reinforce state goals and policies.

II. Current Minimum Admission Standards

Regular Freshman Admission*

- Complete a college preparatory curriculum
- Earn a grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or higher on all courses
- Take a standardized college admission test (SAT or ACT)
- Achieve a minimum score on the Admissions Index

* Each public four-year institution may admit up to 15% of freshmen who fall outside the minimum standards (Alternative Freshman Admission).

II. Current Minimum Admission Standards: College Preparatory Curriculum

Required High School Core Courses

4 years	English (3 years in classes with emphasis on reading and writing, 1 year of elective)
3 years	Mathematics (through Algebra 2)
3 years	Social Studies
2 years	Foreign Language
2 years	Science (1 year of lab science)*
1 year	Fine, Visual, or Performing Arts/Core Course Elective

*Two lab sciences will be required for students applying to college in fall 2010.

II. Current Minimum Admission Standards: College Preparatory Curriculum

Pros

- A rigorous high school course of study is the strongest predictor of student success in college.
- Core course requirements are broad, not prescriptive, so local school districts have flexibility and autonomy.
- Applied course equivalencies are allowed in place of more traditional academic courses.

II. Current Minimum Admission Standards: College Preparatory Curriculum

Cons

- Students who do not take courses in math and foreign languages in their junior/senior years often must enroll in remedial courses in college.
- Core courses do not necessarily cover the subject content expected by colleges (as assessed by college placement tests).
- Core course titles and Carnegie units do not necessarily relate to mastery of learning standards.

II. Current Minimum Admission Standards: Grade Point Average

Minimum GPA

- Students must earn a grade point average of 2.0 or higher on all high school classes (core and elective classes in grades 9-12).

II. Current Minimum Admission Standards: Grade Point Average

Pros

- GPA is based on four years of classes so grading anomalies are smoothed out over time.
- GPA is classroom-based. Teachers know student capabilities best.
- GPA provides a good counterpoint to SAT/ACT scores. (For example, a student may have a high GPA but low test scores.)

II. Current Minimum Admission Standards: Grade Point Average

Cons

- Including all classes in the GPA may encourage students to take less rigorous classes.
- Uneven grading practices across school districts may disadvantage some students. (For example, some school districts do not give D's or F's, some give A's freely, and some don't use grades.)
- A GPA of 2.0 may be too low and may discourage student effort.

II. Current Minimum Admission Standards: SAT/ACT

Standardized College Admission Test

- Students must submit their scores from either the SAT or ACT. There is no state minimum score.

II. Current Minimum Admission Standards: SAT/ACT

Pros

- SAT/ACT predicts student success in the first year of college as well as GPA.
- SAT/ACT allows colleges to objectively compare students from different schools (in Washington and nationally).
- SAT/ACT is cost-effective. (States do not have to develop or evaluate the tests.)

II. Current Minimum Admission Standards: SAT/ACT

Cons

- Many high school students do not take the SAT or ACT.
- SAT/ACT may compete with the WASL for student attention (test overload).
- SAT/ACT is not based on state-adopted K-12 learning standards (EALRs).

II. Current Minimum Admission Standards: Admissions Index

Admissions Index (AI) is a separate score created by combining a student's high school GPA and SAT/ACT scores. (The GPA is weighted more heavily than test scores.)

- Students must achieve a minimum score to be eligible for a comprehensive college/university* and a higher minimum score to be eligible for a research university.^

* Includes CWU, EWU, TESC, WWU.

^ Includes UW and WSU.

II. Current Minimum Admission Standards: Admissions Index

Pros

- AI is a strong predictor of student success in the first year of college.
- AI provides a mechanistic approach to sorting student applications (no personal bias).
- AI helps students know whether they are ready to handle first-year college work.

II. Current Minimum Admission Standards: Admissions Index

Cons

- AI may create the misperception that achieving the minimum or average AI will guarantee admission to a particular college.
- AI may be used to sort students “mechanistically” rather than looking at whole person.
- AI may encourage students to take easier courses to boost their GPAs and AI scores.

III. State College Admission Standards and Other Requirements

State minimum college admission standards differ from other requirements:

- Institution admission standards
- High school graduation requirements

Key Question: Should these standards/requirements be the same or aligned in some way?

III. State College Admission Standards and Institution Admission Requirements

Each four-year public college and university may set admission requirements that exceed the state minimum standards.

Examples of other requirements

- Higher Admissions Index
- Additional course requirements
- Higher GPA
- Essays
- Letters of reference

III. State College Admission Standards and Institution Admission Requirements

Pros

- Institutions have greater autonomy to align their admissions requirements and processes with their overall mission.
- Institutional flexibility fosters competition between colleges and among students.

III. State College Admission Standards and Institution Admission Requirements

Cons

- Students may be confused by the differences between state minimum standards and institution admission requirements.
- College-specific interests may be advanced over statewide interests. (For example, colleges may not want to accept applied/vocational courses. However, state laws say they must as long as the academic and vocational courses are “equivalent.”)

III. State College Admission Standards and High School Graduation Requirements

- All Washington public high schools are required by law to provide students with the opportunity to meet minimum standards for admission to a four-year college or university.
- Although K-12 education has authority for setting standards in secondary schools, higher education has a strong influence.

A Comparison of Minimum State Requirements for High School Graduation and Freshman Admission to College

	Minimum High School Graduation Requirements (effective July 2004)	Minimum Public Four-Year College Admission Requirements
English	3 credits	4 years (3 core, 1 elective)
Math	2 credits	3 years (through Algebra 2)
Social Studies	2.5 credits (U.S. history and government, contemporary world history, geography, or other course equivalents)	3 years
Foreign Language	None	2 years
Science	2 credits (physical, life, earth sciences)	2 years (1 year of lab science)*
Fine, Visual, or Performing Arts	1 credit	1 year of art (or 1 year of core course elective)
Electives	5.5 credits	1 year of elective (or 1 year of fine, visual, or performing arts)

* In 2010, 2 years of lab science will be required. One lab class must be algebra-based.

A Comparison of “Education Reform” Related Minimum State Requirements for High School Graduation and Freshman Admission to College

	Minimum High School Graduation Requirements (effective for freshmen entering h.s. in fall 2004)	Minimum Public Four-Year College Admission Requirements
Passage of 10 th Grade WASL	Passage of all WASL tests required to earn COM.	Colleges intend to use WASL scores to identify promising students and to consider WASL scores among the criteria in some merit scholarships.
Certificate of Mastery (COM)	Required (affects freshmen entering in 2004 who graduate in 2008)	COM is not required for admission.
Culminating Project	School districts determine whether to classify the project as a course and award credit.	N/A
13 th year Plan	Required	N/A

III. State College Admission Standards and High School Graduation Requirements

Aligning State College/High School Standards (Courses and Standardized Tests)

Pros

- Graduating high school seniors would be better prepared for college or the workplace. Sixty percent of job openings in Washington require at least some postsecondary education (2000-2008).*
- Recent high school graduates who enroll in college would be less likely to need remedial coursework.

*Source: *High Skills, High Wages: Washington's Strategic Plan For Workforce Development*, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, 2002.

III. State College Admission Standards and High School Graduation Requirements

Aligning State College/High School Standards (Courses and Standardized Tests)

Cons

- College is not for everybody. Graduating from high school should not necessarily mean a student is ready for college.
- Not all high school students are developmentally ready for college preparatory classes (whether the classes are vocationally equivalent or not).

Your Feedback

We value your ideas. Please send your completed questionnaire to us by March 26, 2004.

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